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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA: PRESIDENT DRNOVSEK SEEKING TO MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE ON CROATIA, MONTENEGRO, IRAQ, AND AT HOME

REF: LJUBLJANA 30

Classified By: COM Thomas B. Robertson for reasons 1.4 B and D

1. (C) Summary: At a lunch January 13, President Drnovsek, accompanied by Presidential Advisor and former FM Ivo Vajgl, outlined for COM his proposals to galvanize international assistance for Darfur (reported reftel), his ideas on how to resolve the long-simmering Slovenian-Croatian border dispute, and his thoughts on how to help Montenegro hold an independence referendum without exacerbating tensions with the opposition and Serbia. Drnovsek also commented on the Government's decision to send four military trainers to NTM-I and on internal Slovenian political developments. News reports appearing January 18 confirm that Drnovsek is in very poor health. End summary.

#### Slovenia-Croatia Border Issue

2. (C) Drnovsek related that he has had discussions with Croatian President Mesic about finding a way out of the current impasse over the GOS-GOC border issue. Drnovsek's proposal is that the two sides should agree to the substance of the Drnovsek-Racan Agreement (initialed in 2001, but not ratified by the Croatian parliament), minus one element: the maritime corridor to the open sea which Slovenia got through Croatian waters. To save face, both sides would maintain their official border claims for purposes of an eventual permanent agreement, but in practice, Slovenia would continue to be able to navigate through what would "provisionally" become Croatian waters. Once Croatia became part of the EU, however, this issue would go away.

3. (C) Drnovsek told COM that he briefed Prime Minister Jansa on the idea and that Jansa responded favorably and may raise this with Croatian PM Sanader. The President mentioned in an aside that he disagrees with Foreign Minister Rupel, who thinks that Slovenia has an advantage as an EU member to pressure Croatia on the border issue. Drnovsek also reported that the Croatian Ambassador in Ljubljana is fairly positive and is waiting for reaction from Zagreb. (Comment: Drnovsek told COM he had discussed all of his initiatives - the Croatia border issue, Montenegro and Darfur with PM Jansa. However, it appears that FM Rupel may have been left out of the loop, reflecting the bad blood existing between the former FM Vajgl and Rupel. End comment.)

#### A Change in Coalition?

4. (C) When COM asked whether the GOS coalition - and particularly the nationalistic Slovene People's Party (SLS) -- could support the idea of such a "provisional agreement" on the border issue, Drnovsek agreed the Government would have some work to do. But, he added, there "might be some changes" in the coalition in the near future which could make working this issue easier. Drnovsek speculated that the primary opposition party, the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS), may actually split soon because the majority of more moderate members are fed up with current president Jelko Kacin's leadership style. Vajgl, who is clearly involved behind the scenes, added that even the majority of LDS parliamentary members might leave to join a more moderate group. (Comment: Drnovsek was clearly hinting, as he has in the past, at the desirability of a grand coalition of the governing Slovene Democratic Party (SDS) and the LDS to provide a more consistent centrist leadership for Slovenia. End comment.)

#### Montenegro Referendum

5. (C) Drnovsek said that in a recent conversation during Montenegrin President Djukanovic's visit to Slovenia during the holidays, Djukanovic had asked for help in "coming out of the current relationship with Serbia." Drnovsek noted that the three-year term of the agreement between Serbia and Montenegro on not holding a referendum on independence expires on February 7. He reported that he and Djukanovic discussed how to proceed with such a referendum without exacerbating tensions with the opposition. Drnovsek told COM that Djukanovic had proposed much

earlier, but had not gotten any Serbian response, the idea that immediately before a referendum he would announce that if the referendum were successful, the soon-to-be-independent Montenegro would conclude an association agreement with Serbia that would establish the basis for shared embassies overseas, a joint Defense Ministry, a joint parliament, joint participation in NATO activities, and no tariffs or border controls between the two countries. All of this would be designed to lessen tensions that might exist between the Montenegrin forces for independence and

those opposed to it.

16. (C) Drnovsek also discussed the issue of what conditions are necessary for the referendum to pass. He said that the Montenegrin opposition is demanding that any vote require an absolute majority of eligible voters for independence to be valid, and that Djukanovic believes it should be a simple majority of voters. Drnovsek proposed that Djukanovic compromise with the opposition and adopt the Danish model, under which forty or more percent of eligible voters would have to support independence. Drnovsek said Djukanovic found this to be an interesting and attractive idea. Drnovsek mentioned that he has discussed this with Solana and urged Solana to bring the Montenegro opposition on board with it. He thought we might want to use our good offices to bear in that direction as well.

#### Slovenia Decision on Iraq

17. (C) COM thanked Drnovsek for his support for the GOS decision to send trainers to Iraq. Drnovsek said that while he did not agree with the initial decision to go to war, he feels strongly that the U.S. cannot leave Iraq now. He expressed conviction that an early U.S. departure would lead to chaos. He reported that PM Jansa had informed him about the decision before it was made public. Vajgl criticized the Government for keeping its decision on Iraq secret from the opposition. Drnovsek disagreed, characterizing LDS president Kacin as untrustworthy and difficult to deal with, and therefore it was understandable why the Government did not preview its decision with Kacin.

#### Drnovsek's Health

18. (C) The Slovenian press is reporting that Drnovsek's health is worsening. One paper, Dnevnik, quoted the President as acknowledging that his cancer has spread and that he has given up on conventional medical treatment. The commercial broadcaster POP TV said the President discussed his health publicly for the first time with a Croatian publication, revealing that his last tests in January 2005 showed no improvement in his condition. There is frequent speculation that Drnovsek's ambitious initiatives regarding Kosovo, Darfur and other Balkans issues may be prompted by his poor health and desire for a lasting legacy as a peacemaker.

ROBERTSON

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